Visions & Trends

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A changing market structure?

Colin WARD

The first half of 2012 has not seen the optimism that was present in the first few months of 2011 in the stationery and office supplies market.

Lower top line sales for the majority of businesses and squeezed margins continue to place emphasis on cutting costs. This trend seems to be across the board, affecting large multi-nationals and smaller players alike. Giants such as HP have announced massive job cuts of 27,000 employees by 2014.

The trend for large scale layoffs has hit every sector of the economy, so with a reduction of the number of white-collar workers across the developed economies coupled with tighter budgets, office supplies resellers are also having to reassess their strategies. Many are continuing to broaden product portfolios by incorporating higher growth categories such as facility management and computer accessories. However, will this tough economic environment lead to more extensive changes?

Ton Adam, CEO, ACI Supplies, sees important changes taking place in the fragmented European market for office supplies - a category that the distributor is expanding. He argues that the present market structure is unsustainable and in the future the office supplies business will move towards a structure of distribution more like that of computer supplies. Read the full interview and other trends and industry news in this edition of Visions & Trends.

Enjoy your reading!

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